

elt NOTES!

CCA Teachers' Newsletter UPDATES, TIPS AND RESOURCES

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From theory to Practice

AI: Challenges and opportunities

By Danny Torres, AEP Teacher

Little did we know that after the hit of the COVID pandemic, changes would not surprise us as much. However, we are experiencing pivotal moments of transformation in humankind. Take, for instance, the Hollywood SAG-AFTRA strike taking place as you read this article. While one could have expected Sarah Connor to save us from the imminent impact of AI, it is actually *The Nanny's* lead star, Fran Drescher, who warns us about the power technology is having, at least in the film industry, "I think that the whole world is looking at us right now, as human beings in all different walks of life are being replaced by robots", she said.

AI has been around for a while, but now it is accessible to everyone anytime through apps like ChatGPT, which reached 100 million users at the beginning of the year. With such figures and news, it is normal to feel both overwhelmed and even threatened by the recurring fear of losing one's job. It is clear that education plays a crucial role in understanding these transformations and making the most out of them.

At this initial stage of AI, we are just witnessing and taking notes. Therefore, it is important to get a better insight on its pros and cons, so that we can respond effectively to the challenges that may arise. Here, you will find opportunities to take advantage of as educators, as well as areas that might represent improvement chances and further research.

Opportunities

1. Maximizing Teaching Skills: The applications that AI has brought so far are worth listing. First, teachers and educators who work on curricular design can spice their work, ranging from lesson planning to PBL, and syllabi design and evaluation. Since GPT models are fine-tuned as conversation bots, it is quite practical to type the right commands for you to get prompts, ideas for activities, text samples, and more.

Second, you can level up your teaching just by using AI as pen pals or evaluators of ideas and thoughts we have, or merely for learning, making it a powerful course of information and inspiration.

Last, fostering differentiated instruction. Our classrooms are full of diversity and challenges, and they demand an open-minded and strategic approach. By leveraging various resources and methods, educators can effectively teach topics and approach different contents. This, within the Universal Design for Learning framework, serves as an opportunity for broadening our possibilities to teach and work in various settings sharing real impact on English learners not only in local contexts but around the globe. (Nieves, 2023)

2. Assessment: In as much as innovation can sparkle in planning and teaching, there are positive chances to make assessments more effective, varied, and customized. Even though within the field of EFL we are used to getting trained in testing skills due to the impact of international exams and certifications, traditional tests and summative evaluations do not always work. By having the assistance of AI, teachers can come up with more effective and engaging tasks. Starting from scratch and putting in the right prompt, you can get more than 10 ideas within 30 seconds. By writing the type of results, target population, aim, or raw ideas for a design, AI models can suggest a refined tool or the steps to create it. By trusting your



teacher's gut, one can effortlessly curate them and adapt them. Thus, the ones who will benefit firsthand will be students and even peers who can share their inspiration and ideas.

3. Workload: It is no secret our profession takes time to be well crafted and executed. After the pandemic, our intricate social fabric and administrators have promoted self-care as a means to improve one's general well-being. But sometimes it is hard to make the time, or we have grown accustomed to working, neglecting to truly sense and appreciate the beauty of life itself. AI poses a great opportunity for making our job faster and more constructive. By exploring available tools, planning, grading, and providing feedback can be accelerated or customized. For one thing, when accessing the right tools, presentations, infographics and text can be easily generated for specific purposes. In addition to this, AI may be a satisfactory assistant to support evaluation purposes. By entering a piece of text and asking for its proofreading and edition, both novice and serious teachers can save time and learn more from the writing process and the expectations of writing being passed through the filter of an international AI model. Qualitative feedback, comments, motivating messages, and personalized posts for our media can be generated. In a nutshell, the sky is the limit, our job is to be clever researchers, innovators, and curators of every moment and task that we undergo on an everyday basis.

Challenges

1. Am I being replaced by AI? This semester, AI will be formally integrated into the coding course of computer science at Harvard: Starting in the fall, students will be able to use AI to help them find bugs in their code, give feedback on the design of student programs, explain unfamiliar lines of code or error messages, and answer individual questions. (Steinberg et al., 2023). Probably we will eventually share tasks with robots and AI, but if so, it is going to take a while, at least in Colombia. In the meantime, on the contrary, we need to keep a positive mental attitude towards AI and promote its application among learners and fellow teachers to showcase its potential and risks. Under a critical view, AI can be a powerful EFL tutor that is here to stay. In consequence, a challenge for governments and administrators is to train teachers by means of accepting, as it will play a decisive role in the fields of science, education, business, and art. The more information and practice we get, the more prepared we will be when facing actual or ethical implications and applications of AI in the field of EFL (Jiang, 2023)

2. Will writing skills be affected in the long term? When faced with difficult tasks, L2 writers may resort to dishonest methods like using machine translation or predictive text agents to complete their work. However, these approaches do not aid language acquisition or writing skill improvement for language learners. (Gayed et al. 2022).



For this reason, AI needs to be moderated and better studied. The Dutch government is about to ban phones in schools: “Students need to be able to concentrate and need to be given the opportunity to study well. Mobile phones are a disturbance, scientific research shows. We need to protect students against this,” added the first minister Robbert Dijkgraaf in a public statement, following the initiative by the Finnish and German in Europe (Deutsche Welle, 2023). When it comes to EFL and ESL instruction, writing skills get jeopardized if they are not put into practice and tested correspondingly. For such reasons, as educators, we must be entitled to take action. By promoting ethical pre-writing, composing, and editing skills and strategies, we can provide students with toolkits to figure the whole process on their own while being supported by AI language models such as chat bots, online in-time editors and translators. Being professionals in the teaching of communicative skills, we need to be a step forward and administer guidance.

3. Responding to real-life needs: All coming literature and research cannot focus only on the understanding, development, and use of AI. As EFL professionals who are self-driven individuals, our job is to continue specializing ourselves on various manners. Given that AI is a multi-disciplinary teaching and learning environment, we need to be able to tailor content, activities and projects that are meaningful and impactful for our students’ lives. We are experiencing a cultural transformation, and more and more companies and foreign institutions have an eye on our potential. However, it hurts to say we are far to be considered a bilingual country, and English should represent a chance for inclusion and personal and professional development for everyone. Likewise, in a country like ours, teachers are always looking for chances to improve their lives as well as to find new horizons, opportunities and additional income. Being on top of trends and tools that can impact our ways of working and educating places us in a field with vast opportunities. We just need to specialize and look for better chances for professional development and teamwork.

Suggestions At This Stage

1. Start Using It and Automate Tasks: Teaching involves a lot of miscellaneous tasks that occur on an everyday basis. By using AI for planning, assessing, or designing educators can save themselves some time, as they become experts on their use and promote autonomous learning practices: “The less students need educators to be the main source of knowledge, the more educators can focus on developing the ability to curate, guide, critically assess learning, and help students gain skills that are so much more important than memorizing information.” (WEF, 2023). Likewise, with the automatization of these tasks, AI could simplify teacher workflows, allowing them to allocate more time to strengthening connections with students and prioritizing their education and growth.

2. Curate and Edit (Go Beyond Automation): The preparation, planning, and reflection loop where teachers engage in activities like professional development, curriculum planning, and evaluating as well as the moment-to-moment decision-making loop where teachers make real-time choices while actively teaching in the classroom demand some extra work even if tasks have been already automated. With enough practice, teachers will be able to spot and detect AI language, since patterns can be predictable. However, errors are often patterns and predictable, therefore it is our duty to guarantee transparency, integrity, and personalization. As much as a senior teacher can notice plagiarism, teachers will easily tell whether an assignment was done with AI apps or bots or not, thus the key relies on tailoring down, filtering and fostering a humanistic loop following the “ACE” principle (centering educators). (U.S. Department of Education, 2023)

3. Promote its Ethical Use and Opportunities for All: Share its benefits and downsides with your community of practice. AI offers everyone equal learning, regardless of gender, disability, socioeconomic status, ethnic or cultural heritage, or where they live. The incorporation of AI in education must avoid widening the digital gap and limiting chances to take malicious advantage of it, as stated in Beijing Consensus, in its pre-pandemic publishing (2019).

Conclusion

It is necessary to acknowledge the transformative impact of AI in various aspects of education and the concerns related to job displacement. What’s more, we should embrace AI as a powerful tool for educators to enhance their teaching skills, assessment methods, and overall job efficiency. It should be emphasized that it is crucial for educators to respond to real-life needs by incorporating AI into multi-disciplinary teaching environments and focusing on the significant impact of English language education for personal and professional development. By being proactive, specialized, and adaptable to trends and tools, educators can harness the vast opportunities presented by AI to upgrade and polish their teaching practices and improve students’ learning experiences.

Towards the Consolidation of an Inclusive Library

By Deissy Garcia, CCA Library Analyst



Considering that one of the main challenges faced by educational institutions is related to the need to transform, adapt, and promote an inclusive educational offering, the Centro Colombo Americano Bogota, as a Binational Center that fosters English language learning as a second language, joins the task of designing and implementing strategies to overcome various barriers to access for vulnerable individuals.

This is achieved not only through the creation of inclusive training programs but also, through the development of different initiatives. For example, the library has undertaken the process of identifying and selecting information resources, striving to increase the acquisition of materials that cater to the specific needs of our students, such as books in large print, audio, braille, and accessibility options within the digital library. Additionally, efforts are made to enhance the teachers' skills in catering to these population groups.

As a demonstration of these efforts, the library has compiled a selection of texts available in both print and digital formats. The purpose is to engage the Colombo community in this topic, which is of great interest for the institution's strengthening.

We invite you to explore this material through the following link: <https://shorturl.at/mBCN4>

What else is News?

Expand your Horizons, Embrace Excellence:

Discover your future at the EducationUSA Fair in September!

Your dream to study in the United States may start here! The EducationUSA Fair is 100% face-to-face and free. At this event, you'll have the opportunity to speak with more than 30 representatives from U.S. colleges and universities.

You will be able to find information about:

- Undergraduate programs
- Master's and doctoral programs
- Short courses

People attending this fair will be able to ask about opportunities for scholarships and financial aid. In addition, you will be able to participate in interesting seminars about:

- Standardized tests necessary to apply
- The student visa application process
- The steps to apply to universities in the U.S.
- Fulbright scholarships
- COLFUTURO loans/scholarships



The event is organized by **EducationUSA**, the official source of information to study in the United States. EducationUSA is a global network dedicated to providing information on all kinds of opportunities in that country.

Participate in the EducationUSA Fair in Bogotá on **September 20 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.** at the Hilton Bogotá Hotel. Don't miss it and invite your friends, colleagues, and family members!

Register now and participate! bit.ly/EDUSAFAIR2023BOG

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